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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of elementary and secondary school administrators who were participating in an Entry Year Assistance Program. Opinions were sought from 24 administrators concerning the program both as a whole and focusing on various facets of the program, such as the development of the first-year teacher's professionalism and the impact of the program on the role of administrators. The administrators unanimously agreed that participating in the Entry Year Assistance Program was a valuable process. They described the program as being beneficial in terms of providing guidance to beginning teachers and also described the professional benefits they and other Entry Year Committee members received. The administrators agreed that they incurred several professional benefits as a result of working on the program. Among these benefits were increased insight into the problems of the beginning teachers resulting from more time spent in classroom observations. (JD)

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The Role of Administrators in Teacher Induction: Impact on Teacher Quality

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ABSTRACT

This study is a follow-up of earlier studies which made use of quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the role perceptions of Entry Year Committee members serving on induction teams in Oklahoma. Qualitative means were used in this study to examine the perceptions held by the administrator concerning the program both as a whole and focusing on various facets of the program, such as the development of the first-year teacher's professionalism and the impact of the Entry year Assistance Program on the role of administrators.

Of the administrators interviewed, twenty-two were male and two were female (N=24). They had from nine to thirty-three years of educational experience with a median of twenty-one and one-half years and had served as administrators for an average of eight years. They were employed in school districts ranging from ninety-five to over eighteen thousand students. The administrators had served on an average of five Entry Year Committees. The subjects were interviewed by the researchers who made use of a standard structured interview schedule devised for this purpose. Responses made by the subjects were recorded for analysis by the researchers.

The data collected were coded for patterns or themes which were expressed by the participants concerning the administrators' role. Patterns which seemed to have more significance were identified through consensus of the researchers.

The study found that administrators unanimously agreed that participating in the Entry Year Assistance Program was a valuable process. Not only did they describe the program as being beneficial in terms of providing guidance to beginning teachers, but they also described professional benefits they and other Entry Year Committee members received.

Administrators agreed that they incurred several professional benefits as a result of working in the Entry Year Program. Among these benefits were increased insight into the problems of the beginning teacher resulting from more time spent in classroom observations.

INTRODUCTION

Among the current efforts in educational reform intended to increase the quality of the teaching force are the beginning teacher programs, such as Oklahoma's Entry Year Assistance Program. Seven states have such programs in place and thirty-two others are studying induction programs (Sandefur, 1987). Efforts have been undertaken to examine the impact of these programs on the quality of beginning teachers as well as professional benefits to the experienced members of induction teams (Crawford, McBee, and Watson, 1985; Dade County Public Schools, 1983; Godley, Klug, and Wilson, 1987; Hawk, 1987; Hoffman and Defino, 1985).

Most studies examining induction programs identify the role played by experienced teachers as central to the success of the first year teachers' induction into the teaching profession (Combs, 1985). The ability of experienced teachers to serve as mentors for beginning teachers and their willingness to provide consultation in a nonthreatening manner does much for the professional growth of neophytes in the teaching profession (Combs, Koetting and Friske, 1986; Godley, Klug and Wilson, 1985).

The role of administrators on induction teams is not as well defined. Earlier survey results seem to indicate a difference between perceptions of induction committee members and administrators as to what behaviors administrators reported as most appropriately in their domain (Godley and Wilson, 1983). Their role is further complicated in most cases by having the obligation of evaluation of beginning teachers both in the area of entry-year committees and the school districts' evaluations for retention of teachers. Oklahoma Entry Year Regulations and Guidelines specify that there is to be a distinction made in evaluation for district use and evaluation for

certification (Oklahoma State Board of Education 1984). In other words, it is theoretically possible that induction teams could make recommendations for certification of beginning teachers and administrators recommend not to continue contracts of the teachers or vice versa. This circumstance could occur because of the ability of beginning teachers to discharge their duties outside of their classrooms (for instance, with coaching duties) or the perceived inability of beginning teachers to fit into the community.

The traditional role of administrators is changed as they participate on induction teams. The Oklahoma Entry Year regulations clearly specify that all official actions of the induction committee must be transacted with all committee members present including the entry-year teachers. In this setting, administrators are team members and share their evaluations and recommendations with other team members. In matters relating to team recommendations for certification, administrators do not have any more authority that other team members. This is in contrast to the situation before the Entry Year Program came into existence when administrators and beginning teachers were the only ones privy to evaluations and recommendations by school administration personnel.

PROCEDURES OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The present study is a follow-up of three earlier studies which made use of quantitative and qualitative methods to determine the role perceptions of all four Entry Year Committee Members. In the first study (Godley and Wilson, 1983), Committee members were asked to respond to a questionnaire in which they gave their perceptions of their roles on Entry Year Assistance committees. The other two studies made use of a standard structured interview to gather the perceptions of a) the beginning teachers and b) the teacher

consultants concerning the Entry Year program and its effects on their development as professionals (Godley, et al 1985, 1987). This study extends the above studies to include the perceptions held by administrators concerning the Entry Year Program. Qualitative means were used in this study to examine the perceptions held by administrators concerning the program both as a whole and focusing on various facets of the program, such as the development of first-year teachers' professionalism and the impact of the Entry Year Assistance Program on roles of administrators.

Of the administrators interviewed, twenty-two (22) were male and two (2) were female (N=24). Nine (9) elementary and thirteen (13) secondary principals along with two (2) superintendents were included in the study. They had accrued from nine (9) to thirty-three (33) years of experience in educational systems with a median of twenty-one and one-half (21.5) years and had served as administrators for an average of eight (8) years. They were employed in school districts ranging from ninety-five (95) to over eighteen thousand (18,000) students. The administrators had served on an average of five (5) Entry Year Committees. The subjects were interviewed by the researchers who made use of a standard structured interview schedule devised for the purpose according to guidelines provided by Pelto and Pelto (1978). Ten (10) open ended questions were posed which were based on concerns expressed in the earlier research findings regarding induction programs (see Appendix A).

The research questions used to guide the study were the following:

1. How do administrators view their roles and their ability to fulfill those roles?

2. What effect do the roles of the administrators have on entry-year teachers?

Responses made by the subjects were recorded by means of a cassette tape recorder and then later transcribed for analysis by the researchers.

The data collected were coded for patterns or themes which were expressed by the participants concerning their roles as administrators. Patterns which seemed to have more significance were identified through consensus of the researchers. The patterns were then utilized to examine the administrators' perceptions of their roles and the components within.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicated that administrators differed as to their perceptions of what their roles in the entry year process should be. Reported patterns of behaviors were coded using a previously developed classification system which evolved during analysis of data in the earlier two studies (Godley, et al 1985, 1987). These patterns were: resource person, supplying information concerning resources, materials and ideas, noted by 50% (12) of the participants; support person, bolstering the beginning teachers' concept of themselves, noted by 33% (8) of the participants; problem solver, suggesting possible solutions to problems encountered by beginning teachers, noted by 54% (13) of the participants; evaluator, assessing both formally and informally beginning teachers' skills and abilities, noted by 58% (16) of the participants; and provider of work socialization (Lortie, 1975), introducing the beginning teachers to their new work place, colleagues and routines to be followed, noted by 50% (12) of the participants. An additional pattern of behavior identified as administrative expedition of the entry year process was added to the previously noted patterns of behavior during the analysis of data

for this study. This was found to be necessary because many of the administrators' remarks indicated their indirect involvement through what would be considered administrative behavior (i.e. scheduling, staffing, communicating, coordinating, reporting and directing), noted by 58% (14) of the participants.

Some administrators engaged in all patterns of behaviors while others only indicated engaging in a few. The administrators responded in differing ways to the task of assisting a beginning teacher, with most addressing patterns they found useful in assisting an entry-year teacher.

While all administrators reported they had a significant impact on the entry-year teachers in terms of their professional development, the majority recognized the importance of choosing an appropriate Teacher Consultant for the beginning teacher as being paramount to their roles. Administrators of smaller districts autonomously chose the Teacher Consultant while in larger districts the professional teacher association provided a list of qualified teachers. A composite of the administrators' descriptions of the qualifications needed for effective Teacher Consultants included the need for the Teacher Consultant to be an experienced teacher working in the same area as the beginning teacher who is generally a helpful person and gets along well with colleagues. A typical view of the qualifications expressed by an administrator was the following:

> We follow the state guidelines, (experienced classroom teacher, when possible with same assignment or certification as entry-year teacher) and from that we select the teacher most qualified. If we have more than two people in that assignment, then you start to look at the lesser qualifications such as how

the teacher feels about working with beginning teachers and how helpful that person is normally. I also look at their personalities to see if they would blend so that we may have a good team.

Of the administrators participating in the study, 94% (23) reported professional benefits they derived as a result of having served on an Entry Year Committee. The administrators cited increased contact with the beginning teachers and an increased awareness of the problems of the beginning teachers. They reported more time spent observing in the classroom as beneficial to their understanding of classroom operations. The utility of working with induction teams as everyone worked for the benefit of the first-year teachers was also seen as an important gain for them. One administrator's remarks typify these benefits:

> I think it provides a continual learning process for all of us involved. It (the entry year process) forces us to sit back and rethink some of the things we do on a day to day basis and also it (entry year process) provides a more structured support system for the first year teacher.

They also noted professional benefits to other committee members as well. The administrators were unanimous in the positive impact of the program on beginning teachers. They also reported professional benefits to teacher consultants, noted by 38% (9) of the administrators. As an example, one administrator commented:

> Surprisingly, a lot of our experienced teachers are not going back to school as they formerly did when the state required hours to maintain certification. Now they tune in and listen carefully to what these entry-year teachers know and so the entry-year teacher tends to keep the experienced teacher on their toes.

The administrators 69% (16) noted benefits to higher education representatives. They all indicated that they did not mind higher education representatives visiting their schools and many indicated the desirability of having teacher educators working with their first year teachers. One administrator commented:

> If we (those involved in public schools) are concerned about the quality of our teachers, then so must be the higher education people. They need to be out observing. This is a great follow-up program and I am very much in favor of that.

Another indirect indication of the administrators' support for the program was their answers to the question, "Has the prospect of the Entry Year Program affected your hiring practice?" All twenty four (24) of the administrators reported that they did not avoid hiring a beginning teacher. Several stated that as a result of having served on an entry year committee they were more careful with interviews of prospective staff members. One administrator stated:

> No. Not to that extent (do I avoid the prospect of having an entry-year teacher). Do I look at the professionalism of the applicant a little better? I would say yes, because I have other people looking over my shoulder to see if I have made the correct choice. But as far as staying away from the Entry Year Program, I don't do that.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study seem to indicate strong support from school administrators for the Entry Year Program. The program was viewed as an excellent method for inducting beginning teachers into the teaching profession

as well as being beneficial to the other experienced committee members, including themselves.

The administrators reported differing patterns of behavior in responding to the task of assisting beginning teachers much in the same manner teacher consultants reported in an earlier study (Godley, et al 1987). They viewed their roles somewhat differently than that of teacher consultants in that they most frequently mentioned the role of evaluator and administrative expeditor of the process as essential to their roles. The administrators' choices concerning which methods will be most beneficial in assisting beginning teachers probably have to do with their perceptions of the beginning teachers' needs as well as their perceptions of their overall roles as administrators. However, all mentioned ways in which they had a positive impact on the development of beginning teachers within their schools.

IMPLICATIONS

Although the many facets of the roles played by administrators have not changed, significant variations on old roles have become a reality since the implementation of the Entry Year Assistance Program in Oklahoma. Administrators still find themselves in the same roles of placement of teachers within their districts, assignment of staff within their buildings, and structuring of schedules. New and modified roles have been expanded to include working as clinical supervisors, resource persons, problem solvers, facilitators of work socialization, and providers of support to new teachers for those involved in the induction process. The administrators interviewed gained input concerning the performance of entry-year teachers from visits to the classroom as in the past with the additional input from two experienced professionals on entry year committees. The additional input encouraged

administrators to assess the skills of beginning teachers more carefully and in some cases to allocate additional resources to ensure success of neophytes. It may be postulated that participation in the Entry Year Process encourages administrators to become more involved as instructional leaders within their buildings.

Many of the administrators interviewed indicated that the entry-year process could easily be used as a highly reliable tool for follow-up information for higher education institutions. This suggests that administrators in teacher education programs should seek to formalize information concerning the performance of first year teachers from higher education representatives serving on entry year committees in order to improve their programs. A more direct assessment of their graduates would result instead of solely relying on indirect assessment by questionnaire as is presently practiced in many institutions.

The overall tone of the administrators' remarks indicated that they felt the team approach to induction of beginning teachers was most satisfactory. This suggests that some future reform efforts in the area of teacher preparation might be more successful if a greater base of participation by professionals in the field were to be employed. For this to be reality, rethinking of the traditional roles of teachers, administrators and college professors would be required. The many successes of the Entry Year Process suggest that it may be worth consideration.

Finally, administrators participating in this study viewed the role of Teacher Consultants who acted as mentors for beginning teachers as central to the induction process and that selection of individuals to serve in this capacity was vital to the success of the Entry Year. This implies that

perhaps teachers chosen for those roles should be provided with staff development activities to ensure beginning teachers will have well qualified Teacher Consultants to assist them. It also implies that administrators need to carefully consider the needs of entry-year teachers as they assign Teacher Consultants.

Oklahoma's Entry Year Assistance Programs appears to continue to provide valuable assistance to beginning teachers while at the same time promoting professional growth for members of induction teams. With careful study and thoughtful consideration of the results of this and other studies which examine induction programs, it would seem that this program could not help but improve.

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Appendix A

Higher Education Representatives' Survey

1. What was your public school experience?
2. How long had you worked in the public schools?
3. How long have you worked in education?
4. How many entry year committees have you served?
5. What is your involvement with Teacher Education?

Administrators' Survey

1. What is your perception of the Entry Year Assistance Program?
2. What criteria had you used to select a Consulting Teacher for an Entry year Committee?
3. What changes, if any, has serving on an Entry Year Committee brought to your role as an administrator?
4. Has the prospect of participating in the Entry Year Program had an influence on your hiring practices?
5. What professional benefits has your school experienced as a result of participation in the Entry Year Assistance Program?
6. In what way has your role complemented the role of the other Entry Year Committee members?
7. How do you feel about a person from higher education being in your school to observe Entry Year Teachers?
8. What factors have you found to be a hindrance to your performance as Administrator on Entry Year Committees?
9. What skills or professional traits do you find valuable in assisting beginning year teachers?
10. What advise would you give an Administrator who may be a prospective Entry Year Committee member?